

23 February 1967

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Lunch with General Gerhard Wessel  
Tuesday, 21 February 1967

The Non-Proliferation Treaty

1. Wessel believes that the Western Alliance is for the first time directly and seriously endangered by the political problem related to the NPT. Summary of his views:

a. A serious communications problem between Bonn and Washington is developing. The style of USG-GFR negotiations, aside from substantive problems in the Treaty draft, is contributing to the political problems.

b. All of the deprecators of Bonn's pro-U.S. foreign policy orientation -- the extreme nationalists, the pro-French and the pro-Soviets -- find grist for their mill in this situation.

c. Senior German officials find it difficult to estimate what the real U.S. estimate on the viability and potential of the NPT, as a disarmament measure, really is. Because of the way it is being handled, they feel the motives are a mixture of obscure politics and genuine disarmament efforts.

d. The majority of the German military leaders do not want control of atomic weapons; basically the concept of the U.S. President's having the decision is, soberly examined, a desirable solution. Wessel, unlike some of the German military, sees no hope in a

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national German command which would be militarily ineffectual and politically an invitation to disaster.

e. Because the U.S. is taking the initiative in making the plea for the USSR to cooperate, the dialogue is regarded as in the pattern that gives the Soviets the opportunity to politically exploit the dissensions in the West without the USSR making any significant concession in the power balance.

f. It is questionable whether the NPT is a realistic disarmament measure; it has some characteristics of simply political maneuvering. If it is the latter, the West is likely to pay a very high price. (Wessel has several times quoted an off-the-record expression of opinion by Secretary McNamara that it is inevitable that a number of nations will in the next fifteen years become possessors of atomic weapons regardless of USG and Soviet interests in maintaining the status quo.)

#### Wessel's Future

2. He will remain here until late summer. The Defense Ministry is actively considering the problem of his replacement. General Ferber, who is leaving Washington this week for a troop assignment at Marburg, is the most likely candidate. Ferber has been alerted that he may be asked to take the post after the NATO Military Standing Group moves to Belgium later in 1967. (Ferber, like Wessel, is a Gehlen man.)

3. There is nothing new on Wessel's next assignment. He expects that the decision on Gehlen's replacement will be made in the next six months. Wessel is taking no action at this time to influence a decision. His wife remains unreconciled to the prospect of his assuming the demands of the BND position.

James H. Critchfield